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(71) Applicant and
(72) Inventor: SIA, Cyril, H. [US/US]; P.O. Box 14910, San Francisco, CA 94414 (US).

(74) Agent: ARNO, Thomas, R.; Knobbe, Martens, Olson & Bear, LLP, 16th Floor, 620 Newport Center Drive, Newport Beach, CA 92660 (US).

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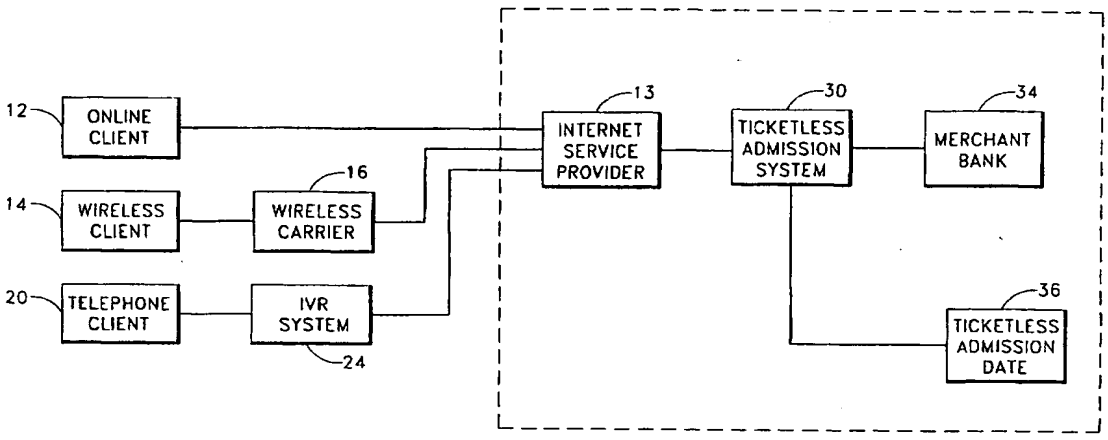

(57) Abstract: Disclosed is a system and method for providing ticketless admission or fares to events at venues. The system includes software for purchasing event admissions or fares by providing a credit/debit card to a booking site on the Internet. The credit card number is then stored to an admissions database. The consumer then goes to the appropriate venue and swipes their credit/debit card through a reader at the venue or transportation entrance. If an authorization is found for the swiped credit/debit card, the consumer is allowed through the entrance and into the venue or transportation vehicle.

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TICKETLESS ADMISSION SYSTEM

Background of the Invention

Field of the Invention

This invention relates to systems and methods for purchasing admissions or fares to particular venues. More specifically, this invention relates to a ticketless admission system that allows a consumer to purchase admissions and enter venues or board transportation without a physical ticket.

Description of the Related Art

Many systems exist for providing admissions to particular events at venues. In this regard, the venues can be movie theaters, playhouses, zoos, theme parks and the like. Specific events are particular movies, plays or shows that are occurring within the venue.

However, virtually all of these venues require a consumer to purchase and present a physical ticket as evidence of the right to enter. Although some venues claim to have "ticketless" admission, in virtually every case some sort of printed document is presented to an usher upon entering the venue. Unfortunately, these types of physical tickets are subject to theft and loss and add to the cost of providing admission to a venue. What is needed in the art is a simple, easy to manage system for providing secure ticketless entry into particular events within a venue.

Summary

One embodiment of the invention is a ticketless system for providing a consumer with admission to a particular venue to attend a particular event. This embodiment includes: a venue inventory database configured to store an inventory of admissions to particular events at a venue; a payment module that obtains a consumer identifier and charges an amount for an admission on an account corresponding to the consumer identifier; a purchased admission database configured to record the consumer identifier along with the admissions to the venue purchased on the account corresponding to the consumer identifier; and a ticketless admission gate configured to capture and verify a consumer identifier against the purchased admission database.

Another embodiment of the invention is a ticketless system for providing a consumer with admission to a particular venue to attend a particular event. This embodiment provides: means for storing an inventory of admissions to particular events at particular venues; means for charging an amount for an admission on an account corresponding to a consumer identifier; means for recording purchased admissions and associated consumer identifiers; and means for capturing a consumer identifier upon entry of a consumer into a venue.

Yet another embodiment of the invention is a method for providing a number of admissions to an event at a venue to a consumer with a consumer identifier. This method includes: querying a venue inventory database to determine if the number of admissions is available; requesting authorization for the price of the number of admissions on an account corresponding to the consumer identifier if the number of admissions is available; recording the number of admissions with the consumer identifier in a purchased admission database if the authorization is granted; subtracting the number of admissions from the venue inventory database if the authorization is granted; capturing the

consumer identifier during entry of the consumer into the venue; and verifying the consumer identifier against the purchased admission database.

One other embodiment of the invention is a method for selling a number of admissions to an event at a venue to a consumer with a consumer identifier that provides: determining if the number of admissions to the event is available; requesting authorization for the price of the number of admissions on an account corresponding to the consumer identifier if the number of admissions is available; recording the number of admissions with the consumer identifier if the authorization is granted; reducing an inventory of admissions to the event by the number of admissions if the authorization is granted; capturing the consumer identifier during entry of the consumer into the venue; and admitting into the venue a number of entrants equal to the number of admissions after verification of the consumer identifier.

Still another embodiment of the invention is a system for providing a consumer with admission to a venue that provides: a first module comprising instructions for receiving a first consumer identifier and using the identifier to electronically pay for one or more admissions to an event at a venue; an entry gate at the venue, comprising a data entry terminal for receiving a second consumer identifier; and a second module for comparing the first consumer identifier with the second consumer identifier, and responsive to a match of the first and second consumer identifiers, providing the consumer with admission to the venue.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Figure 1 is a block diagram illustrating an overview of one embodiment of a ticketless admission system.

Figure 2 is a block diagram illustrating details of one embodiment of a ticketless admission system.

Figure 3 is a perspective view of one embodiment of an entry gate for a ticketless admission system.

Figure 4 is a perspective view of a second embodiment of an entry gate for a ticketless admission system.

Figure 5 is a flow diagram of the transaction logic in one embodiment of a ticketless admission system.

Figure 6 is a flow diagram of the point of admissions logic in one embodiment of a ticketless admission system.

Detailed Description

I. DEFINITIONS

A. Consumer Identifier

A consumer identifier is an identifier (see Identifier below) which corresponds to an account on which a consumer may make purchase. For example, the number on a credit card corresponds to a credit account from the bank which issued the card. Other examples who include ATM cards, smart cards, or government issued identification (such as driver's license or social security number) that a bank has linked to an account.

B. Identifier

An identifier is a string of characters that may include alphanumeric characters and other symbols.

C. **Event**

An event is a specific happening at a venue that a consumer wishes to attend. For example, if the venue is a movie theater, an event is a specific showing of a movie. If the event is a train station, an event is a particular train.

D. **Input Devices**

The input device can be, for example, a keyboard, rollerball, mouse, voice recognition system or other device capable of transmitting information from a consumer to a computer. The input device can also be a touch screen associated with the display, in which case the consumer responds to prompts on the display by touching the screen. The consumer may enter textual information through the input device such as the keyboard or the touch-screen.

E. **Instructions**

Instructions refer to computer-implemented steps for processing information in the system. Instructions can be implemented in software, firmware or hardware and include any type of programmed step undertaken by components of the system.

F. **LAN**

One example of the Local Area Network may be a corporate computing network, including access to the Internet, to which computers and computing devices comprising the system are connected. In one embodiment, the LAN conforms to the Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) industry standard. In alternative embodiments, the LAN may conform to other network standards, including, but not limited to, the International Standards Organization's Open Systems Interconnection, IBM's SNA, Novell's Netware, and Banyan VINES.

G. **Media**

Media refers to images, sounds, video or any other multimedia type data that is entered into the preferred system. Typically media refers to a document that is entered into the system by a document scanner.

H. **Microprocessor**

The microprocessor may be any conventional general purpose single- or multi-chip microprocessor such as a Pentium® processor, a Pentium® Pro processor, a 8051 processor, a MIPS® processor, a Power PC® processor, or an ALPHA® processor. In addition, the microprocessor may be any conventional special purpose microprocessor such as a digital signal processor or a graphics processor. The microprocessor typically has conventional address lines, conventional data lines, and one or more conventional control lines.

I. **Modules**

The system is comprised of various modules as discussed in detail below. As can be appreciated by one of ordinary skill in the art, each of the modules comprises various sub-routines, procedures, definitional statements and macros. Each of the modules are typically separately compiled and linked into a single executable program. Therefore, the following description of each of the modules is used for convenience to describe the functionality of the preferred system. Thus, the processes that are undergone by each of the modules may be arbitrarily redistributed to one of the other modules, combined together in a single module, or made available in, for example, a shareable dynamic link library.

J. **Networks**

The system may include any type of electronically connected group of computers including, for instance, the following networks: Internet, Intranet, Local Area Networks (LAN) or Wide Area Networks (WAN). In addition, the connectivity to the network may be, for example, remote modem, Ethernet (IEEE 802.3), Token Ring (IEEE 802.5), Fiber Distributed Datalink Interface (FDDI) or Asynchronous Transfer Mode (ATM). Note that computing devices may be desktop, server, portable, hand-held, set-top, or any other desired type of configuration. As used herein, an Internet includes network variations such as public internet, a private internet, a secure internet, a private network, a public network, a value-added network, an intranet, and the like.

K. **Operating Systems**

The system may be used in connection with various operating systems such as: UNIX, Disk Operating System (DOS), OS/2, Windows 3.X, Windows 95, Windows 98, and Windows NT.

L. **Programming Languages**

The system may be written in any programming language such as C, C++, BASIC, Pascal, Java, and FORTRAN and ran under the well-known operating system. C, C++, BASIC, Pascal, Java, and FORTRAN are industry standard programming languages for which many commercial compilers can be used to create executable code.

M. **Transmission Control Protocol**

Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) is a transport layer protocol used to provide a reliable, connection-oriented, transport layer link among computer systems. The network layer provides services to the transport layer. Using a two-way handshaking scheme, TCP provides the mechanism for establishing, maintaining, and terminating logical connections among computer systems. TCP transport layer uses IP as its network layer protocol. Additionally, TCP provides protocol ports to distinguish multiple programs executing on a single device by including the destination and source port number with each message. TCP performs functions such as transmission of byte streams, data flow definitions, data acknowledgments, lost or corrupt data re-transmissions and multiplexing multiple connections through a single network connection.

N. **Venue**

A venue is any place that offers admissions for a purchase. For example, a movie theater, playhouse, train station, bus station, museum, trade show, convention and night club are all examples of venues.

II. OVERVIEW

Embodiments of the present invention relate to a ticketless admission system for providing consumers with admissions to particular venues. In one embodiment, the consumer accesses an Internet website that is selling admission to a venue, such as a movie theater. The consumer chooses a desired movie and show time and then enters a consumer identifier, such as a credit card number that is used to purchase admissions to the venue.

Once the credit card charge has been validated by a bank linked to the system, a data record is entered within a ticketless admission system purchased admissions database configured to store the purchase data. The

purchase data record includes, in this embodiment, the number of admissions purchased, the type of admissions (if any) seating assignments (if any) for seats within the venue, the date and time of the event and the credit card number used to make the reservation. As will be discussed below, the ticketless admission system purchased admissions database is also electronically linked to an entrance at the venue or transportation center. In another embodiment, the ticketless admission system is linked to a hand-held device that accesses the purchase admissions database. In this embodiment, a doorman or conductor could authorize entrance into a venue, train, airplane or the like by entering the consumer's credit card number into a hand-held reader. The reader would wirelessly access the purchased admissions database and determine if the consumer had purchased an entry into the site.

When the consumer arrives at the venue, a ticketless entry gate is provided that authenticates the admission which has been purchased by the consumer. A magnetic cardreader, or other mechanism for entering alphanumerical data, is provided at a ticketless entry gate. If the consumer is in possession of the credit card that was used to purchase the admissions, it can be swiped through the magnetic cardreader at the ticketless entry gate. The credit card number is read from the magnetic cardreader and then matched against the purchased admissions database within the ticketless admission system.

If a match is found within the purchased admissions database, the ticketless entry gate displays the number of authorized persons. For example, if the consumer had purchased five admissions, the ticketless entry gate would display "party of five." In some embodiments, the ticketless entry gate includes an entry-limiting device that is configured to allow only five consumers to enter the venue. After five consumers have entered, the device will lock, thereby preventing additional consumers from entering. Examples of such a device include turnstiles, revolving doors and sliding gates.

In another embodiment, the ticketless entry gate includes a seat confirmation printer which prints control stubs which are used by the consumer to find their assigned seats or otherwise provide evidence that the consumer had entered with a valid admission.

This system provides several advantages over prior systems which required the consumer to maintain a printed ticket, or stub that was used to enter the venue. With embodiments of the present invention, the consumer only needs to provide, for example, the credit card used to authorize the original purchase and is thereby provided admission to the desired venue.

III. SYSTEM

Referring now to Figure 1, a wide-area network system 10 for providing ticketless admission to particular venues is illustrated. In this system, an on-line client 12 accesses an Internet service provider 13 in order to be provided with access to the Internet. The on-line client 12 might be, for example, a personal computer or network of computers that provide a direct link to the Internet service provider 13. In addition, a wireless client 14 can communicate with the Internet service provider 13 through a wireless carrier 16.

Examples of wireless clients include cellular and digital telephones, wireless modems, and personal digital assistants (PDAs) having built-in communication facilities. Other clients include a telephone client 20 which

communicates through an interactive voice response system 24 to the Internet service provider 13. By using verbal commands, a consumer may pick up a conventional telephone and speak to the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system 24 in order to connect, and be provided with communications, through the Internet service provider 13. In this embodiment, the spoken commands act similarly to typed commands to purchase admissions on-line.

The Internet service provider 13 communicates data from each of the clients through the Internet to a web server 26 within the Ticketless Admission system 30 (Figure 2). The web server 26 is preferably a conventional Internet server that provides Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) pages to a browser running within the on-line client 12 or wireless client 14. Well-known Internet browsers include Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer. Of course, the web server could also be located externally at, for example, the venue site as will be illustrated with regard to Figure 2. A link from the external web server to the Ticketless Admission system would then be provided.

One such web server might be a site for providing admissions to selected venues throughout the United States. Of course, embodiments of the invention could provide admissions to venues anywhere in the world. Other web servers would include servers running within the particular venue that is hosting a selected event. For example, a movie theater or playhouse would have their own server from which consumers could purchase admissions.

In practice, a consumer attaches to the web server 26 by using the on-line client 12 to browse the web server 26 by well-known techniques. Of course, it should be realized that the consumer could link to the web server 26 through a venue web site 27. Also communicating with the Internet service provider 13 and web server 26 is a ticketless admission system 30. Embodiments of the ticketless admission system store and track that data that is entered by the consumer as admissions are purchased. This is explained more completely below with regard to Figure 2.

Communicating with the ticketless admission system 30 is a merchant bank 34 that acts as a clearing house for credit cards, smart cards and debit card charges by consumers purchasing admissions. Also communicating with the ticketless admission system 30 is a ticketless entry gate 36 which controls access to particular events within selected venues.

Referring now to Figure 2, the on-line client 12 attaches to the web server 26 in order to purchase admissions for an upcoming event at a particular venue. The web server 26 presents pages that allow the consumer to find the appropriate venue, enter any necessary registration information and purchase admissions or give other identifying information. Once the consumer makes a purchase request 100, it is transmitted from the web server 26 to an Internet interface 104 within the ticketless admission 30. The purchase request preferably includes the name, credit card number, venue, event and number of desired admissions. As the purchase request 100 is received by the ticketless admission system 30, the credit card number is first transmitted to the merchant bank 34 in order to request charging authorization from one of a plurality of bank card authorities 106A-C. If the consumer's credit card is not accepted by one of the bank card authorities 106A, a credit refusal message 110 is transmitted to the web server 26 and forwarded to the consumer.

Within the ticketless admission system 30 is a venue user transaction database 115. This database stores the information from the purchase request 100 so that it can be retrieved later by the ticketless entry gate 36. One example of a transaction table within the venue user transaction database 115 is illustrated below as Table 1.

Table 1

Transaction Table

Customer Name	Number Admissions	Credit Card Number	Venue Code	Event Code
Jackson, Eric	1	1234 2432 2322 2223	22242	35533
Franklin, Steve	4	1113 3353 4644 4939	36464	37557
Atkins, Harold	3	3939 3937 9533 2982	847232	4339399
Smith, John	2	8383 7929 2927 2938	1330038	544589

Once a purchase request 100 has been made to the ticketless admission system 30, a venue admission inventory table 120 is read to determine if there is inventory available for the event at the particular venue. As can be imagined, blocks of admission inventory for a plurality of venues can be stored within the venue admission inventory table 120.

Also within the ticketless admission system 30 is a purchased admissions database 124 which stores records of purchased admissions to particular events at the venues. Thus, the venue admission inventory table 120 provides a list of available admissions to events happening at a particular venue, while the purchased admissions database 124 maintains a list consumers and consumer identifiers that have purchased admissions.

As illustrated, there can also be an external venue admission inventory table 122 and external purchased admissions database 126 which might, for example, reside at the venue site. Thus, by using the external databases, the data from the ticketless admission gate 36 would not need to be transmitted across the Internet to the Ticketless Admission system 30 for verification.

It should be noted that once a purchase request 100 has been accepted by the ticketless admission system 30, an E-mail receipt 130 is transmitted to an Email server 28 and thereafter to the consumer to confirm the number of purchased admissions for the specified event at the venue.

Referring now to Figure 3, one embodiment of a ticketless entry gate 200 is illustrated. In this embodiment, the ticketless entry gate 200 includes a turnstile 210, magnetic cardreader 215, and display screen 220. Within the ticketless entry gate 200 is a communication system for providing communication to an admission database that stores records of authorized admissions. As can be imagined, the admission database can be stored within the venue, or accessed by a high speed communication line through the Internet to the ticketless admission system 30.

The magnetic card reader 215 provides a means for transmitting information on a consumer's credit card to other parts of the system. One type of card reader is the MT-211232 Swipe Reader manufactured by Mag-Tek Corp. (Carson CA). Once a consumer swipes a card through the card reader 215, the number is matched against the

admission database to determine if the consumer has admission rights for the event showing that present time within the venue. If the consumer's credit card information indicates that an admission had been purchased for the event at the venue, the turnstile 210 is unlocked so that the proper number of consumers can enter the venue.

In addition, a control stub 230 can be printed from the ticketless entry gate 200 so that the consumer can provide a confirmation of their seat to an usher within the venue. As can be realized, the consumer did not need to present any type of ticket in order to enter the ticketless entry gate. The only requirement for admission was the credit card that was linked to the original admission purchase for the designated event.

In an alternate embodiment, the venue could be provided with a portable hand-held computer that included a magnetic card reader. As consumers entered the venue, they would present their credit card to the usher who would swipe their card through the magnetic reader. The hand-held computer would be equipped with a wireless modem that accessed the admissions database and determined the proper seat assignment for the consumer. The usher could then guide the consumer to their seat.

As illustrated, the display 220 provides an indicator of how many consumers will be allowed admission into the venue based on the number of admissions previously purchased.

Of course, it should be realized that while one embodiment of the invention relates to the use of credit card numbers to purchase admissions on the Internet and later authorize admissions to the venue, the scope of the invention is not so limited. Any type of consumer identifier (e.g.: data string) that can be stored into the admissions database and thereafter confirmed at the ticketless entry gate is contemplated. For example, one could purchase admissions using a driver's license, so long as mechanism was in place to provide payment to the venue for the admission. For example, the venue may have a list of authorized driver's license numbers and their corresponding credit card number. Thus, when a driver's license is entered, the corresponding credit or debit card is charged to pay for the admission. When the consumer entered the venue, their driver's license would be slid through the magnetic card reader on the ticketless entry gate 200. The admissions database could then search for the driver's license number and thereafter verify if the consumer had purchased any admissions to the venue.

A second embodiment of a ticketless entry gate 300 is illustrated in Figure 4. In this embodiment, there is no physical turnstile to prevent consumers from entering a particular venue. Rather, a large display 310 displays the number of authorized consumers that have purchased admissions. Accordingly, a security officer could monitor one or more ticketless entry gates to ensure that the number of consumers entering the venue matched the number of authorized admissions showing on the display 310.

In addition, in one embodiment, the ticketless entry gate 300 provides a keypad 320 for manually entering an admission number, such as a credit card or driver's license number, so that the system can retrieve the authorized admission for the particular venue.

Of course, it should be realized that once a particular consumer identifier has been entered into the keypad 320 or card reader, the system would no longer allow admissions for that number. This would prevent one consumer from providing their identifier or credit card to other people, thus providing them with unpaid admission to the venue.

In one embodiment, a flag is set in the admissions database once a consumer identifier has been used to provide admission to the venue. This flag would note that the admission had already been used so that further admissions to the venue would not be provided.

In another embodiment, the ticketless entry gate 300 can provide a contactless reader 330 that can be used to read smart cards or other nonmagnetic consumer identification cards. These contactless card readers could be based, as one example, on the UniVision SB600 MIFARE® core module. Similar to magnetic cards, a consumer would enter an identifier related to the smart card into the system through one of the client devices 12, 14 or 20. It should be noted that the client device might incorporate a contactless card reader for providing such information to the ticketless admission system. Once the consumer identifier was recorded, and an admission purchased, the data would be sent to the admissions database 124 at the venue. When the consumer attempted to enter the venue, the smart card would be placed near the contactless reader 330, and the system would read the consumer identifier from the smart card. The consumer identifier could then be matched with records in the admissions database 124 to confirm the admission to the venue.

IV. PROCESS

Referring now to Figure 5, a process 400 for recording a venue admission within the consumer transaction database 115 is illustrated. The process 400 begins at a start state 402 and then moves to a state 404 wherein a purchase request 100 is received by the ticketless admission system 30. The purchase request includes a consumer identifier, the number of admissions, venue and event. If the consumer identifier is not a charge/debit card number, the system will also accept a charge/debit card number to provide payment for the admission.

The process 400 then moves to a state 410 wherein a query is made to the vendor user transaction database 115 that is linked to the venue admission inventory 120. The process 400 then moves to a state 412 wherein the seating inventory for the requested event at the venue is located, and a search for available seats to the chosen event is made. A determination is then made at a decision state 415 whether there are any seats or admissions available to the selected event. If a determination is made that there are (P) number of seats or admissions available to the specific event, the consumer identifier or credit card number is used to charge the consumer for the total number of admissions at a state 420.

A determination is then made at a decision state 424 whether the bank has accepted the requested credit/debit charge made to a credit card that has been entered to pay for the calculated charges for the admissions. If the bank does accept the charge at the decision state 424, a record of the purchase is entered into the venue user transaction database 115 at a state 427. An E-mail is then produced at a state 430 to notify the consumer that they had purchased admissions for the selected event. In one embodiment, this scheduled event and venue information is entered onto a consumer's calendar stored on the web server 26. Once a receipt has been sent to the consumer, the process 400 moves to a state 434 wherein the charge made to the consumer's credit card is added to the cash balance of the venue that has sold the admission.

The process 400 then moves to a state 436 wherein the proper amount of inventory of seats is removed from the venue admission inventory table 120 for a particular event. The process 400 then moves to a state 438 wherein the charge card number and number of admissions are recorded in the venue user transaction database, and, alternatively the purchased admissions database 124 or external purchased admissions database 126.

Thus, overall, Figure 5 describes a process wherein a consumer purchases admissions on-line by using, for example, a credit or debit card. The credit/debit card number is thereafter stored as a consumer identifier that allows admission into the selected event at a venue. Once the charge card has been authorized, and the number of admissions determined, this information is stored within a transaction database. When it is time for the consumer to enter the particular venue to attend an event, the consumer simply swipes their credit card through a magnetic cardreader which matches the credit card number previously stored to the admissions database for the selected event at the venue. If a match is found, the entry gate allows the number of authorized admissions into the venue, as described below. If the consumer identifier (such as credit/debit card number) is not found, the consumer is denied access to the venue.

Referring now to Figure 6, a process 500 of admitting consumers into a venue is explained. The process 500 begins at a start state 502 and then moves to a state 504 wherein a consumer's credit card is read at the ticketless entry gate of a venue. As can be envisioned, the venue includes a database of events and schedules so that consumers will only be admitted during the appropriate times to attend a particular event. For example, if a movie theatre is showing movies every 2 hours, a consumer will only be allowed admission to a selected movie (event) within 15 minutes of the start of the movie. Accordingly, a consumer would thus not be able to enter the movie theatre (venue) throughout the day if the purchased admission was for a movie that began in the evening.

Once the credit card number has been read at the ticketless entry gate, the process 500 moves to a state 510 wherein a query is made to the venue's admissions database 124 with the credit card number of the consumer. The process 500 then moves to a decision state 512 to determine whether the credit card number is authorized to allow admissions to the current event at the venue. If a determination is made that the credit card number is authorized, the process 500 moves to a state 516 wherein the size of the party is read from the admissions database. In addition, a display of the number of admissions authorized by the credit card number can be displayed on the ticketless entry gate display unit 220 (Figure 3).

The process 500 then moves to a decision state 520 to determine whether a turnstile is available at the current ticketless entry gate. If a turnstile is available, the process 500 moves to a state 524 wherein the activation mechanism for the turnstile is instructed to allow the proper number of admissions to the event at the venue. For example, if the consumer had purchase four admissions to the venue, the turnstile would be released to allow four people to enter the venue.

A determination is then made at a decision state 530 whether it is necessary to print control stubs for the selected event at the venue. As described above, these stubs provide the consumer with a written description of their seat assignment after they have gained admission. These stubs are thereafter used by ushers and the consumer to

find the appropriate seats in the venue. If a determination is made to print stubs at the decision state 530, the process 500 moves to a state 534 wherein the control stubs are printed at the ticketless entry gate. The process 500 then terminates at an end state 536.

If a determination had been made at the decision state 512 that the card number had not been authorized to provide admission to the current event at the venue, the process 500 moves to a state 540 wherein the display 220 on the ticketless entry gate indicates that admission is not authorized for the current event. The process 500 then terminates at the end state 536.

This invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from the essential characteristics as described herein. The embodiments described above are to be considered in all respects as illustrative only and not restrictive in any manner. The scope of the invention is indicated by the following claims rather than by the foregoing description.

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A ticketless system for providing a consumer with admission to a particular venue to attend a particular event, comprising:

a venue inventory database configured to store an inventory of admissions to particular events at a venue;

a payment module that obtains a consumer identifier and charges an amount for an admission on an account corresponding to said consumer identifier;

a purchased admission database configured to record said consumer identifier along with the admissions to said venue purchased on the account corresponding to said consumer identifier; and

a ticketless admission gate configured to capture and verify a consumer identifier against said purchased admission database.

2. The ticketless admission system of Claim 1, wherein admission data of a plurality of venues are stored in said venue inventory database and said purchased admission database.

3. The ticketless admission system of Claim 1, further comprising an additional venue inventory database and a corresponding additional purchased admission database that store admission data of an additional venue.

4. The ticketless admission system of Claim 3, further comprising a venue index database to index said venue inventory databases and said purchased admission databases.

5. The ticketless admission system of Claim 1, wherein said payment module communicates with a merchant bank to request authorization on the account corresponding to said consumer identifier.

6. The ticketless admission system of Claim 1, further comprising an Internet interface connected to said venue inventory database and said purchased admission database, said Internet interface being used by consumers to access said ticketless admission system.

7. The ticketless admission system of Claim 1, wherein said venue inventory database is maintained on a local server at said venue.

8. The ticketless admission system of Claim 1, wherein said purchased admission database is maintained on a local server at said venue.

9. The ticketless admission system of Claim 1, wherein said ticketless admission gate is configured to display the number of admissions purchased on the account corresponding to said consumer identifier after verifying said consumer identifier against said purchased admission database.

10. The ticketless admission system of Claim 1, wherein said ticketless admission gate is configured to print seating confirmation information.

11. The ticketless admission system of Claim 1, wherein said ticketless admission gate further comprises a device for physically limiting the number of consumers entering a venue.

12. The ticketless admission system of Claim 11, wherein said device is selected from a group consisting of: a turnstile, a revolving door and a sliding gate.

13. The ticketless admission system of Claim 11, wherein said device is configured to limit the number of consumers entering a venue to the number of admissions purchased on the account corresponding to said consumer identifier.

14. A ticketless system for providing a consumer with admission to a particular venue to attend a particular event, comprising:

means for storing an inventory of admissions to particular events at particular venues;

means for charging an amount for an admission on an account corresponding to a consumer identifier;

means for recording purchased admissions and associated consumer identifiers; and

means for capturing a consumer identifier upon entry of a consumer into a venue.

15. The ticketless admission system of Claim 14, wherein said means for storing an inventory of admissions comprises a first database.

16. The ticketless admission system of Claim 14, wherein said means for charging an amount for an admission on said account comprises software that verifies the available credit on said account and charges for an admission on said account.

17. The ticketless admission system of Claim 14, wherein said means for recording purchased admissions and associated consumer identifiers comprises a second database.

18. The ticketless admission system of Claim 14, wherein said means for capturing a consumer identifier comprises a magnetic stripe reader.

19. The ticketless admission system of Claim 14, wherein said means for capturing a consumer identifier comprises a keypad.

20. The ticketless admission system of Claim 14, wherein said means of capturing a consumer identifier comprises a smart card reader.

21. A method for providing a number of admissions to an event at a venue to a consumer with a consumer identifier, said method comprising:

querying a venue inventory database to determine if said number of admissions is available;

requesting authorization for the price of said number of admissions on an account corresponding to said consumer identifier if said number of admissions is available;

recording said number of admissions with said consumer identifier in a purchased admission database if said authorization is granted;

subtracting said number of admissions from said venue inventory database if said authorization is granted;

capturing said consumer identifier during entry of said consumer into said venue; and

verifying said consumer identifier against said purchased admission database.

22. The method of Claim 21, further comprising:

displaying information from said venue inventory database on a web page; and

updating said information on said web page after said authorization is granted.

23. The method of Claim 21, further comprising querying a venue index database to locate said venue inventory database and said purchased admission database corresponding to said venue.

24. The method of Claim 21, further comprising e-mailing to said consumer a confirmation of said purchase request if said authorization is granted.

25. The method of Claim 24, wherein said confirmation comprises instructions for storing the date of said event in said consumer's calendar.

26. The method of Claim 21, further comprising displaying said number of admissions on a display.

27. The method of Claim 21, further comprising printing seat confirmations.

28. The method of Claim 21, further comprising admitting into said venue a number of entrants equal to said number of admissions after said verification of said consumer identifier against said purchased admission database.

29. The method of Claim 28, wherein said admitting said number of entrants into said venue comprises turning a turnstile.

30. The method of Claim 28, wherein said admitting said number of entrants into said venue comprises revolving a lockable revolving door.

31. A method for selling a number of admissions to an event at a venue to a consumer with a consumer identifier, said method comprising:

determining if said number of admissions to said event is available;

requesting authorization for the price of said number of admissions on an account corresponding to said consumer identifier if said number of admissions is available;

recording said number of admissions with said consumer identifier if said authorization is granted;

reducing an inventory of admissions to said event by said number of admissions if said authorization is granted;

capturing said consumer identifier during entry of said consumer into said venue; and

admitting into said venue a number of entrants equal to said number of admissions after verification of said consumer identifier.

32. A system for providing a consumer with admission to a venue, comprising:

a first module comprising instructions for receiving a first consumer identifier and using said identifier to electronically pay for one or more admissions to an event at a venue;

an entry gate at said venue, comprising a data entry terminal for receiving a second consumer identifier; and

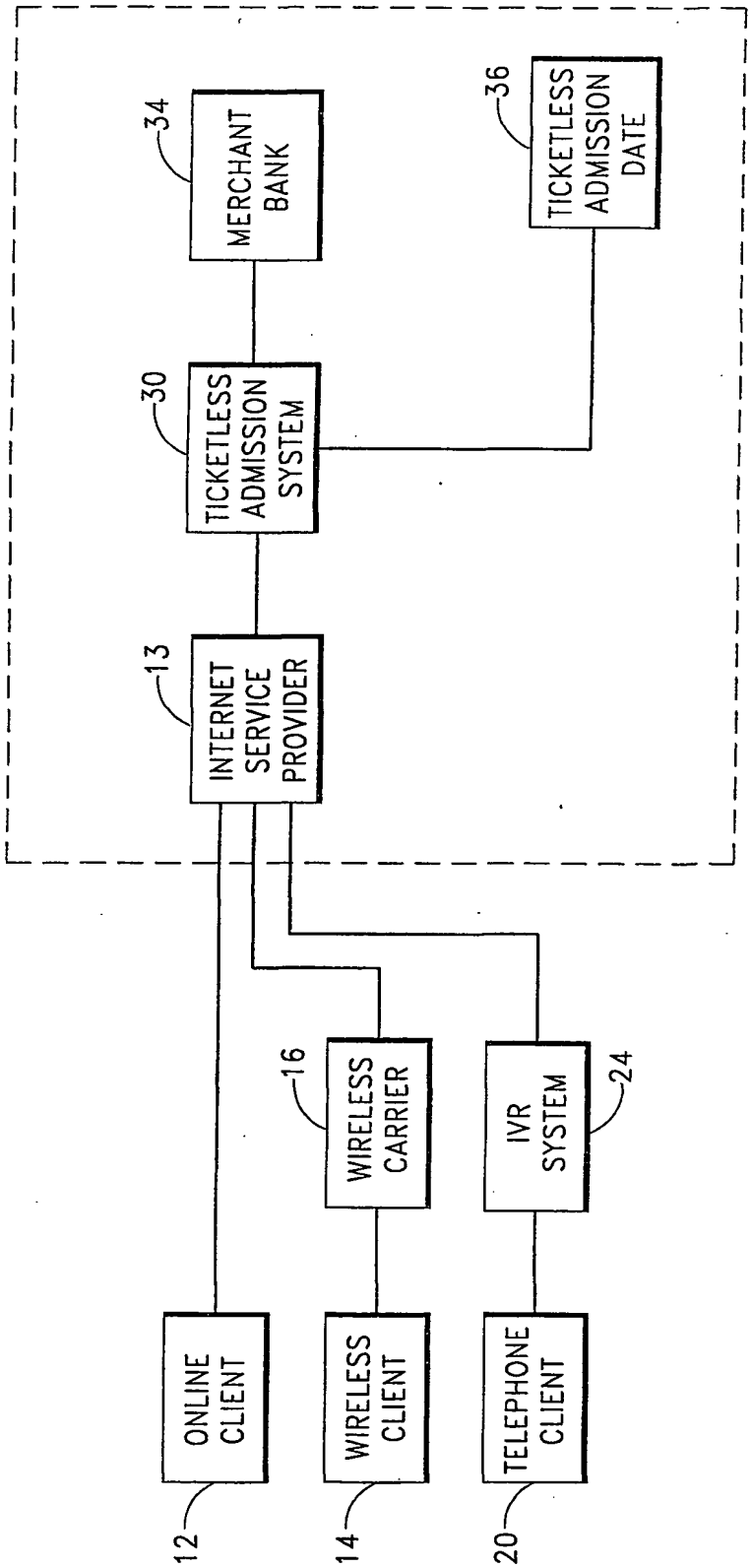
a second module for comparing said first consumer identifier with said second consumer identifier, and responsive to a match of said first and second consumer identifiers, providing said consumer with admission to said venue.

33. The system of Claim 32, wherein said consumer identifier is a credit card number or a debit card number.

34. The system of Claim 32, wherein said venue is a movie theater and said event is a movie.

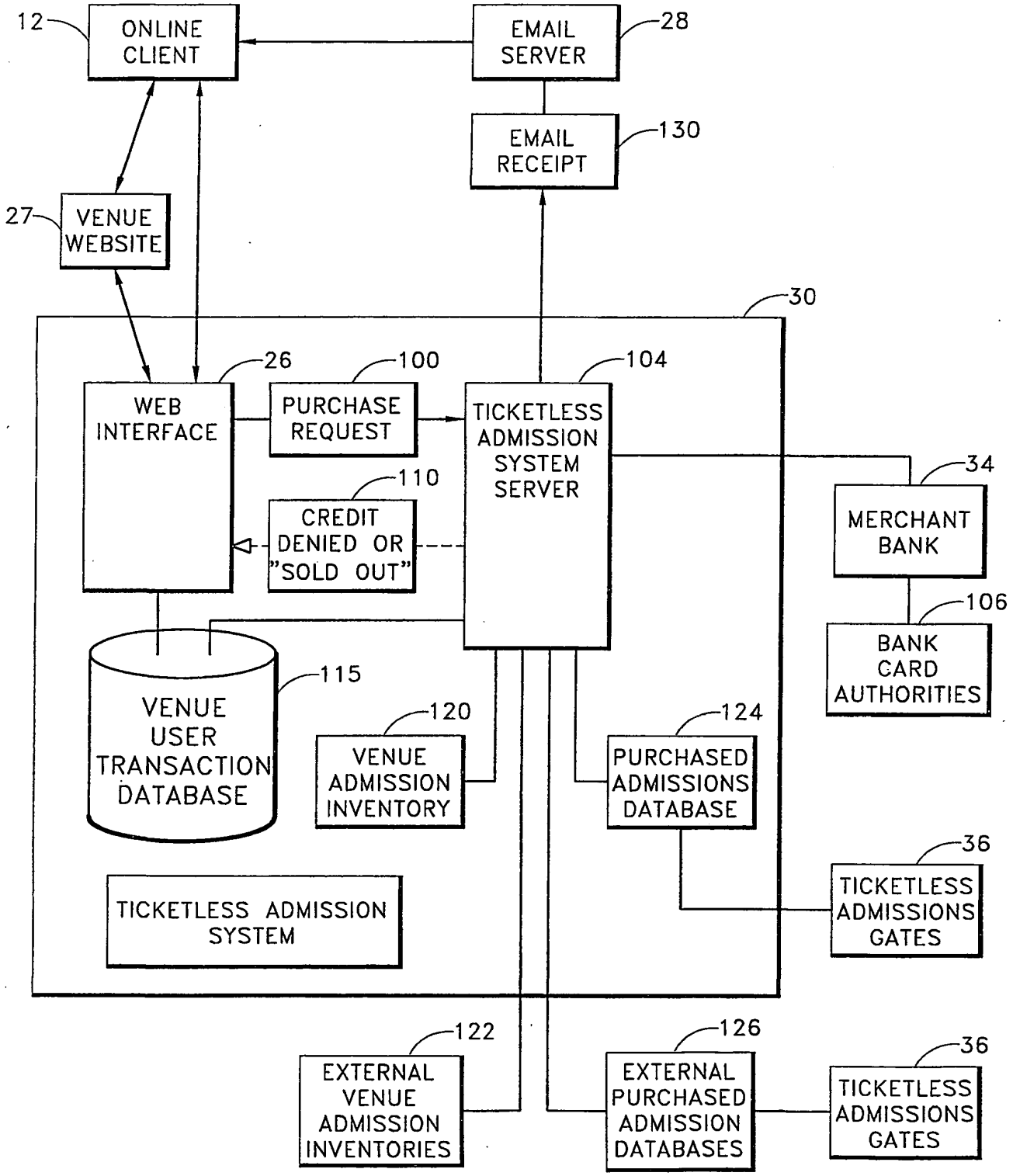
35. The system of Claim 32, wherein said entry gate comprises a magnetic card reader for reading said second consumer identifier.

36. The system of Claim 32, wherein said entry gate comprises a keypad for receiving said second consumer identifier.



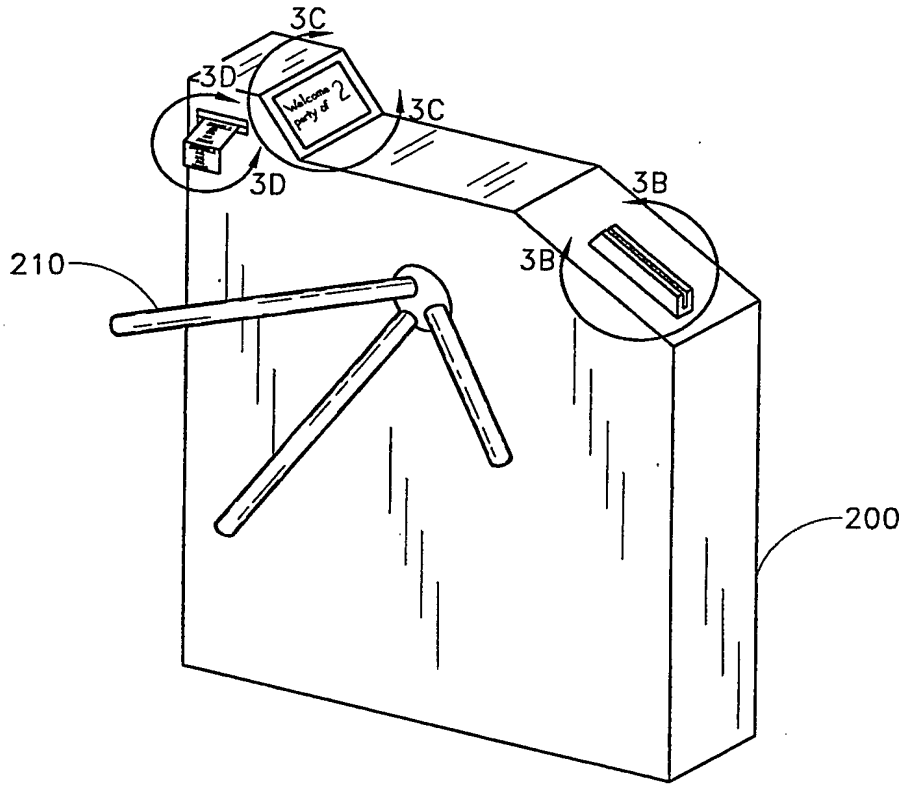
OVERVIEW OF THE SYSTEM

FIG. 1



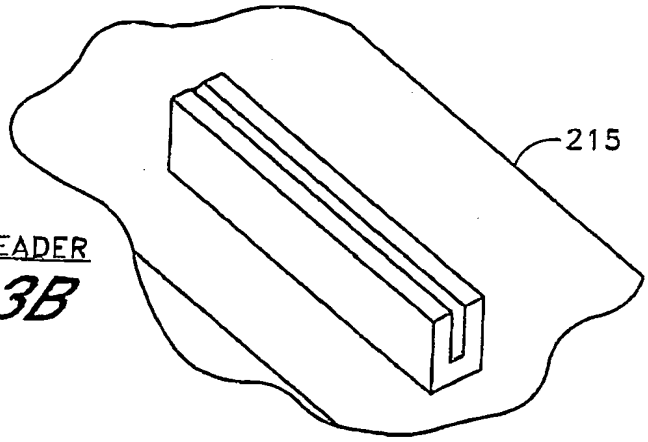
DETAILS OF THE TICKETLESS ADMISSION SYSTEM

FIG. 2



TICKETLESS ENTRY GATE

FIG. 3A

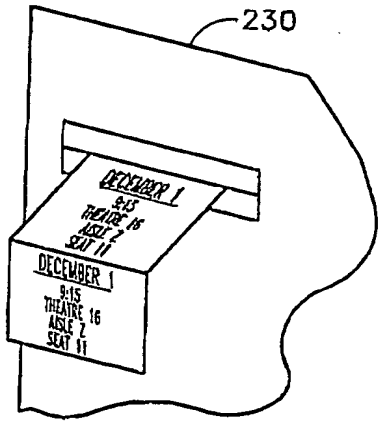


MAGNETIC READER

FIG. 3B

DISPLAY

FIG. 3C



SEAT CONFIRMATION STUB

FIG. 3D

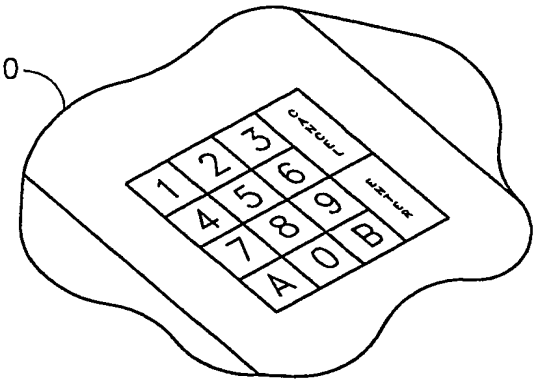
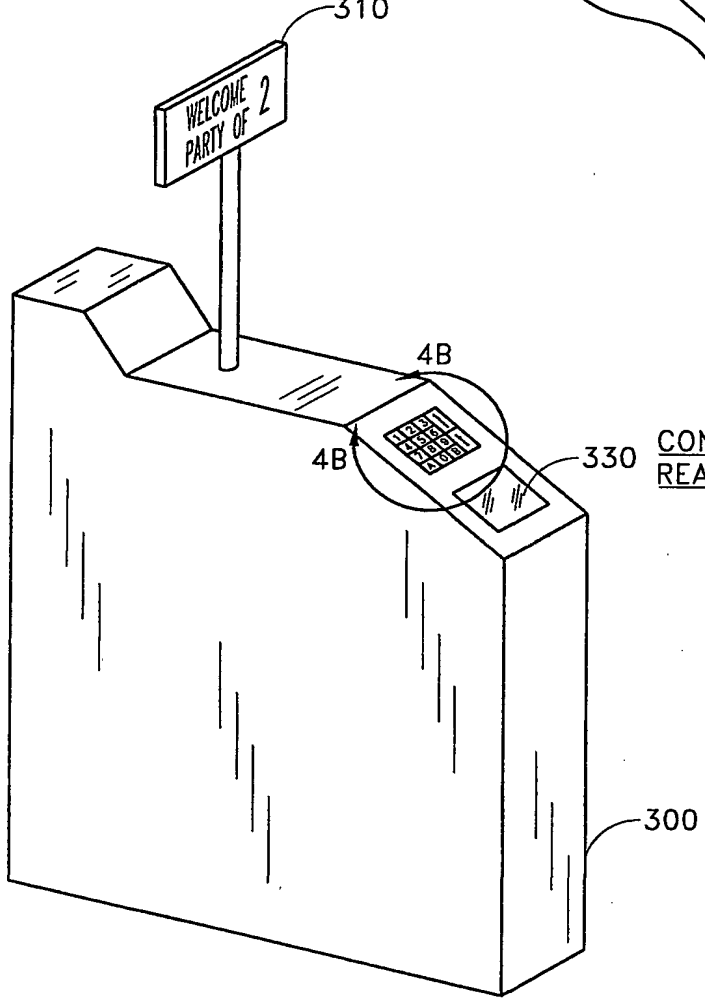
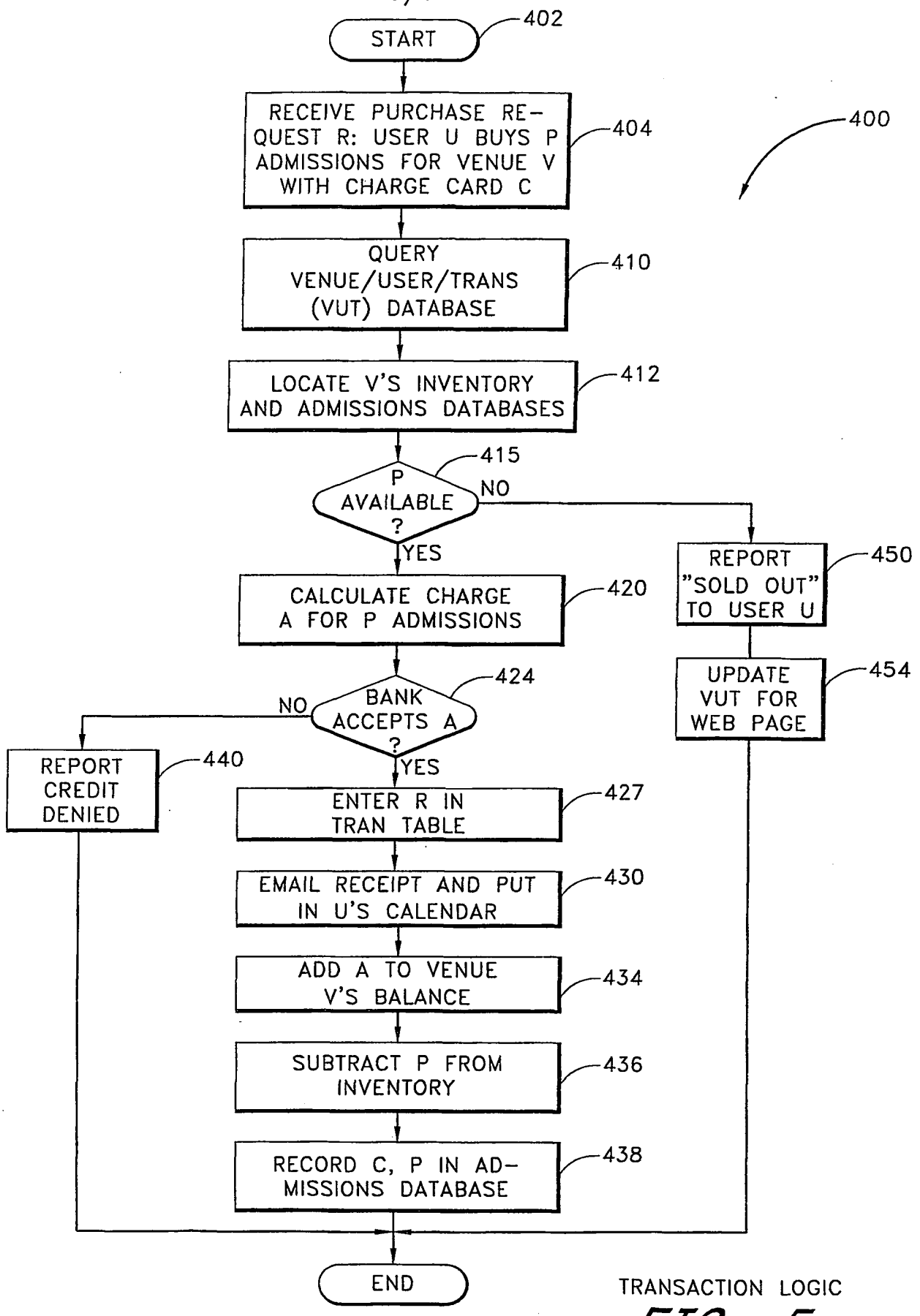


FIG. 4B



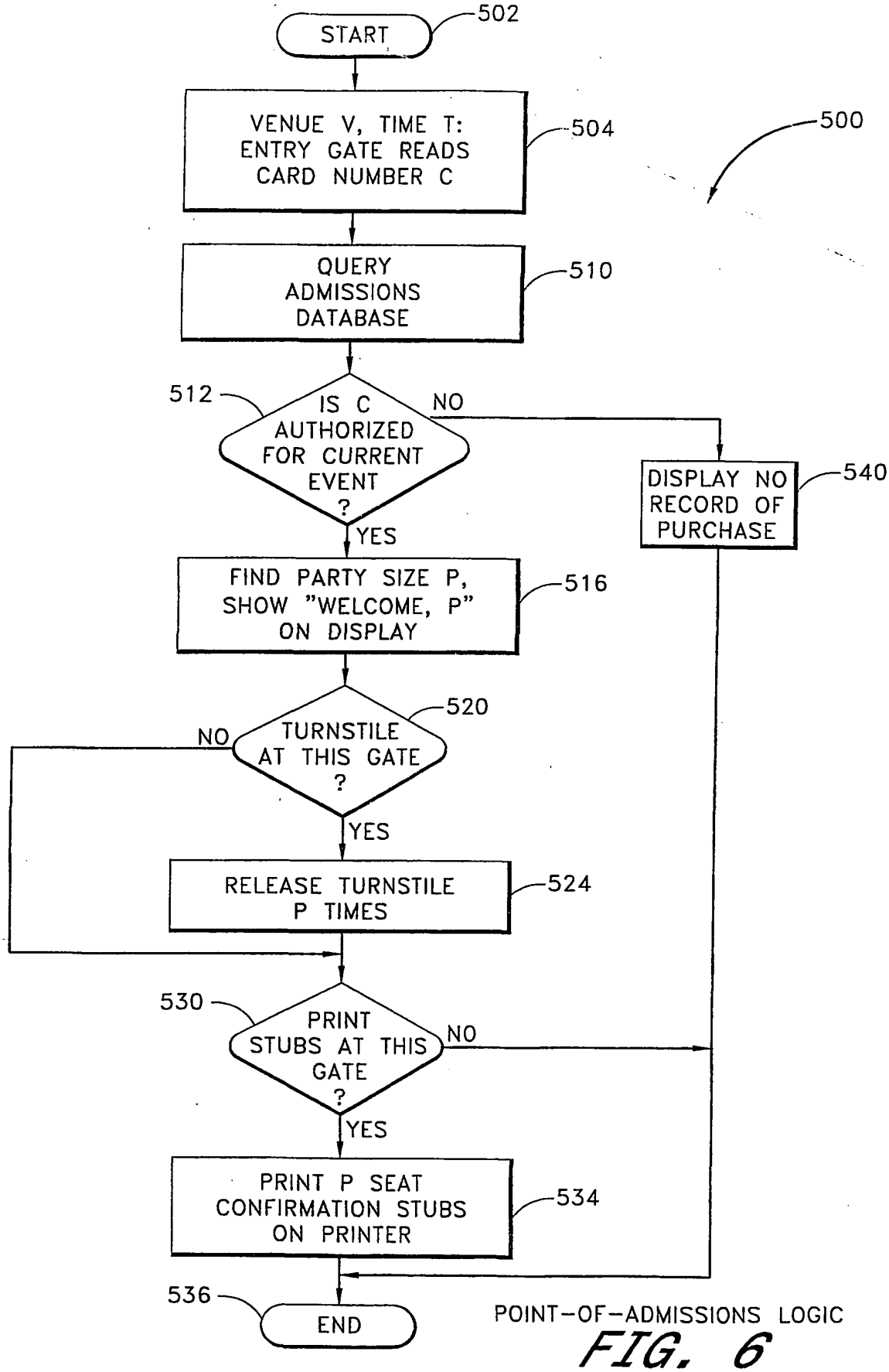
TICKETLESS ENTRY GATE

FIG. 4A



TRANSACTION LOGIC

FIG. 5



POINT-OF-ADMISSIONS LOGIC

FIG. 6